Firm using voice lie detector

By JON STANDEFER
Post Reporter

A 1984ish lie detector instrument which is probably illegal under state law is being used extensively by a local private investigation firm, Security Associates International of 400 Durham.

The machine, known as a Psychological Stress Evaluator (PSE) and manufactured by Dektor Counterintelligence of Springfield, Va., is purported to be able to determine deception by analysis of a subject's tape recorded voice pattern.

Security Associates is the firm which assisted the recent 208th Dist. Court grand jury in its lengthy investigation of former Police Chief Carrol Lynn and electronics technician J. L. Patterson.

Asked if the PSE was used in that investigation, Security official Pepper Crowder said only that it is used by the firm in all but "a very few investigations."

Later, however, Crowder and Security director David Salmon denied the PSE was used during the grand jury probe.

The legality of the PSE, the fact that it can be used surreptitiously, and its reliability have generated a growing controversy among the instument's advocates and critics.

The legal question stems from the fact that under the state polygraph law, "any instrument used to test or question individuals for the purpose of detecting deception or verifying truth of statements" must record a subject's heart rate and respiratory rate.

Since the PSE analyzes only the voice pattern, it appears not to meet the law's requirements, unless it is used in conjunction with a regular polygraph.

That, at least, is the opinion of the state polygraph examiner's board. PSE advocates, on the other hand, counter that the

Please see Voice/page 11A

Voice lie detector used by private firm

From page 1

PSE is not a polygraph and therefore does not come under the law, that the law was written before the PSE was developed and therefore could not apply to it, and that, in any case, polygraph examiners see the PSE as an economic threat because the instrument is much simpler to use and does not require extensive training as does the polygraph.

Another consideration is that the PSE can be used without the subject's knowledge. Any good tape recording, whether in person, over the telephone or even from a television, can be analysed for stress in the voice, a condition which is an indication of lying, according to operators.

PSE machines have been used recently to analyse recordings of Lee Harvey Oswald after the assassination of President John Kennedy and of Sen. Edward Kennedy following the Chappaquiddick incident.

According to the PSE analysts, Oswald was telling the truth when he said he did not shoot Kennedy and Sen. Kennedy was also truthful when he gave his version of the Chappaquiddick auto accident.

The reliability of the PSE is open to question. Despite the claims of the instrument's developers, there has been very little scientific evaluation. Except for test results supplied by Dektor, which obviously has a financial interest in its machine, most studies made available to The Post indicate negative results.

A 1973 Fordham University evaluation known as the Kubis Report, for example, compared the PSE with polygraphs and concluded that the PSE was less reliable not only than the polygraph but even less reliable than trained interrogators using no machine.

A Defense Department statement made public last year indicated that the Department of the Army, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations and the National Security Agency had all tested the PSE and found it to be insufficiently reliable for use.

Despite the detractors, PSE advocates such as Security's Salmon are convinced the machine works.

He also told The Post that a local judge had authorized the use of the PSE in a recent civil case, with the consent of both parties and their attorneys.

Salmon would not disclose the name of the judge, however.

And while Salmon does not admit that use of the PSE is illegal under state law, he does say that his firm did not make extensive use of it until the past Legislature had considered a bill which would place the use of the PSE under regulation of the Texas Board of Private Detectives, Private Investigators and Private Security Agencies.

According to Salmon, the bill was reported out of committees in both houses but was not considered during the last-minute rush of legislation at the end of the session.

Nevertheless, the fact that the bill was passed out of committee led Salmon to infer that use of the PSE was not now regulated by any other law, including the polygraph statute.

While Salmon says his firm does not make surreptitious use of the PSE, he concedes that its use should be carefully regulated.

And although the validity of the use of the PSE has not been determined in a Texas court, other states have come down on both sides of the question.

Louisiana permits the use of the PSE, for instance, while Mississippi does not. The chairman of the Mississippi Board of Polygraph Examiners, B.L. Sartin, told The Post last week that an investigation there is now in its final stages and that four persons will be charged with illegal use of the PSE.

XEROXED FROM
HOUSTON POST
DATED AUG. 13, 1975